

# NEWPORT NEWS

Brief History of the South's Greatest Seaport.

## PORTRAITS OF MUNICIPAL OFFICERS

Some of the Advantages of the Phenomenal City at the Mouth of the James.

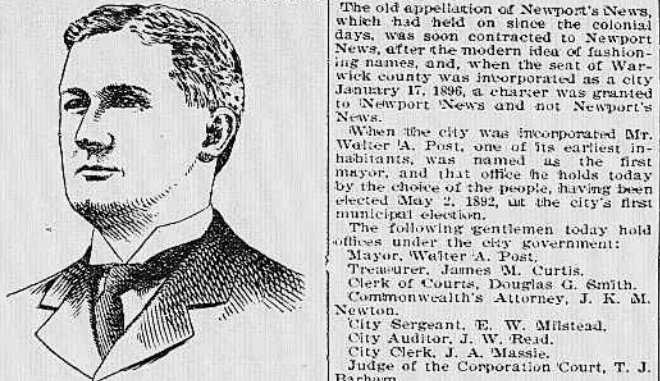
Like other Virginia cities Newport News can lay claim to some historic interest and dates the origin of its name back to the old colonial days when the Virginia coast, and especially the James river was the Mecca for English settlers. Unlike most Virginia cities, however, there is nothing left standing today that figured on the site of "Newport News," three hundred or even as late as a hundred years ago. Not a building standing today was in evidence twenty years ago. The city is practically newly constructed, and has all modern improvements.

When Captain John Smith returned to Jamestown in 1607, after making an exploration of the Chesapeake Bay and its tributaries, he found only thirty-



MAYOR W. A. POST.

eight of his colony of settlers alive, the others having been either murdered or succumbed to the inevitable through unavoidable privations. Just as despair

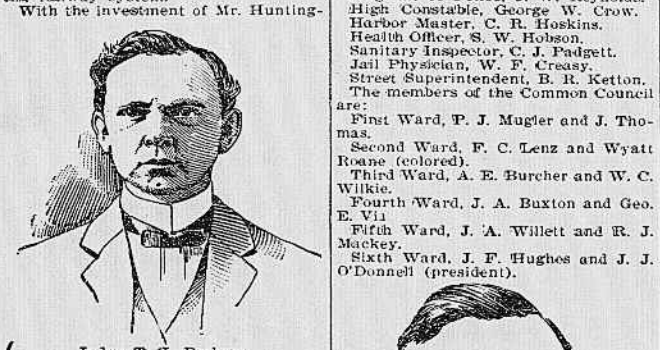


Hon. Thomas Temple Powell, Member State Legislature.

seemed to be settling on the few survivors, Captain Newport arrived with his second visit to the James, making a landing at the point where the Chesapeake and Ohio piers now stand. It will be of interest to know that the first colonists to land at Newport News numbered 120, and, to use the words of Captain John Smith, were made up chiefly of "gentlemen and gentlemen."

The news of the arrival of Newport with an abundance of supplies was sent to the Jamestown survivors by messenger and from that time on the place where the English captain landed was known as "Newport News."

About 25 years ago Mr. Collis P. Huntington, the great self-made man, visited the present site of the city and at once became impressed with its wonderful natural advantages as a seaport. In after years, when Mr. Huntington gained control of the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad, he recollected the many advantages that were awaiting development at the magnificent harbor at the unknown village of Newport News and determined to make this point the deep water terminus of his far-reaching railway system.



Judge T. J. Barham.

ton's capital in this section, the insignificant village commenced to assume the appearance of a town and with each succeeding year the population swelled materially and there was gradually more evidence of wealth and liberal investment.

Private residences, stores and buildings of other descriptions, large and small, soon commenced to go up. The heart of the town, when it first commenced to grow, was on the south side of the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad, now known as "Hell's Half Acre." One by one small houses were erected on this side of the railroad and the new community soon commenced to spread to the north and east, as it were.

The growth of the new Virginia town was heralded abroad and it enlarged with such rapidity that in 1850 it had a population of 3,500.

Dwellings and mercantile establishments were put up very rapidly after that and when the plant of the Newport News Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company, another of Mr. Huntington's in-

Collector of Customs, Jesse W. Elliott. Postmaster, Fred Read. In addition to the judge of the corporation court and the harbor master, the governor makes the appointments for quarantine officer, now held by Dr. A. C. Jones.



Police Justice, J. D. G. Brown.

The plan of Newport News was laid out by the old Dominion Land Company, with broad streets running at right angles, so that the elements of light and air would always be abundant, no matter how large and crowded the city should be. The numbered streets run east and west and the designated avenues north and south. Located on a high bluff at the very mouth of the James River, the city stretches back over a level territory as the southern extremity of the Peninsula of Virginia, as it is termed. It comprises about 12 square miles inside of its present corporate limits. The growth of the city has been so rapid that the next few years will see a necessary extension of the boundary lines.

The city is lighted by electricity and gas, furnished with water from the Newport News Light and Water Company's large water works, and has a pleasant, suburban climate. The city will shortly be drained by a \$75,000 system of sewerage, the contract for which will be let in a few days.

Of the industries of Newport News, the shipbuilding plant in the north end of the city ranks first. This immense plant represents an outlay of \$7,000,000, and employs 3,500 men.

The Chesapeake and Ohio railroad has eight large piers along the water front at the southern extremity of the city and adjacent to these is this great corporation's grain elevator, which is an industry in itself. In 1892 there was more than a mile in length and contains 33 miles of railroad track. The road does an immense passenger, export and coal business.

The large brass foundry of the Caskey Brothers is one of the city's big industries and is located in the north end near the shipyard. All of the brasswork for the shipyard is executed in this establishment. The company also has a large outside custom.

The Peninsula Electric Light & Power Company, having its offices at the intersection of Warwick and Twenty-sixth streets, furnishes all of the electric power and artificial light for the city. The company is owned by the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad.

The Newport News Gas Company has only recently put in a \$65,000 plant and has been furnishing illuminating and heating gas for several months. The company is owned by the Chesapeake and Ohio railroad.

When the city was incorporated Mr. Walter A. Post, one of its earliest inhabitants, was named as the first mayor, and that office he holds today by the choice of the people, having been elected May 2, 1892, at the city's first municipal election.

The following gentlemen today hold offices under the city government: Mayor, Walter A. Post; Treasurer, James M. Curtis; Clerk of Courts, Douglas G. Smith; Commonwealth's Attorney, J. K. M. Newton; City Sergeant, E. W. Milstead; City Auditor, J. W. Read; City Clerk, J. A. Massie; Judge of the Corporation Court, T. J. Barham; Police Justice, J. D. G. Brown; Chief of Police, S. J. Harwood.

There are many other smaller industries, such as lumber establishments, brick yards, iron and marine repairing works, stone yards, etc.

The city has three banks—First National, Citizens and Marine and Schenck Brothers. There are security and trust companies, building and loan associations and the like without number. There are a great many real estate firms, all of which are doing a good business, and a large number of fire and life insurance companies have local representatives.

Every description of retail business to be found anywhere in this country is carried on in Newport News. There are also wholesalers in a number of lines.

The Newport News, Hampton & Old Point Electric Railway has a city line, running from the C. & O. depot to the shipyard, which cuts and carries the passengers to Hampton and Old Point Comfort. The Chesapeake and Ohio Railroad operates an hourly short line service between this city and Old Point.

The in and out of Newport News every day; the Old Dominion Steamship Company has a daily service to New York; the Merchants' and Miners Transportation

## THE OLD KEARSARGE

History of the New Battleship's Predecessor.

### FAMOUS NAVAL VESSEL

How Alabama Was Sent to the Bottom of the Sea in 1864 Off Cherbourg, France.

In February, 1861, Congress authorized the construction of seven ships of war, and the Navy Department, so as to take advantage of the plans, already in its possession, of the ships built three years previous, in 1858, duplicated the Monitor in the Kearsarge, the Ironclad in the Onondaga, the Monitor in the Tuscumora, and the Monitor in the Seminole in the Wachusett. These vessels were of about 3,500 tons displacement. By subsequent action of Congress, at the special session of 1861, authority was granted to the Secretary of the Navy to build other ships of war similar to those previously ordered, making fourteen new vessels in all. Besides those already mentioned were the Taconic, Schoenow, Onondaga, Lafayette, Ticonderoga, Shenandoah, and Onondaga. The hulls of all fourteen of these ships of war were built by the Federal States Government at the navy yards, three each at Portsmouth, N. H., and Boston, Mass., and four each at New York and Philadelphia. The machinery being built by contract at various places in New England, New York, and Philadelphia. They were all large, handsome vessels, for that type, and of excellent service during the war between the states and for several years thereafter.

The machinery of the Kearsarge was built by the well known firm of Wood, Ruff & Beach, of Hartford, Conn., the contract price for it being \$104,000. The various portions of the vessel were as follows: Length over all, 214 feet,



John Read, City Auditor.

8 inches; length on water line, 195 feet, 6 inches; beam, 33 feet, 10 inches; depth of hold, 16 inches; draught, 10 feet. The ship itself was well built, although it was not designed with any special reference to speed, and its fine condition at the time of its famous duel with the Confederate cruiser, Alabama, after having been in service for thirty months, is the best possible proof of the zeal and capability of the engineers who had charge of the work. An Englishman, Mr. Frederick Milnes Elke, who published a pamphlet account of the battle with the Alabama soon after it occurred, was so impressed with the evidence of the condition of the machinery of the Kearsarge that he wrote:

"I have not seen the engines in first-class condition in every part, as though they were fresh from the workshop, instead of being, as they are, half through the third year of the conflict."

At the time of its famous conflict with the Alabama, the Kearsarge had been in commission for more than two years.

The Kearsarge had a well organized and liberal administration of naval discipline; that length of time being more than sufficient to convert almost any class of recruits into thorough men-of-war. It is true the crew, divisional officers, as well as marines, were all volunteers. The material was intelligent to start with, and after thirty months of constant training aboard ship, had arrived at a state of competence and familiarity with their duties that left absolutely nothing to be desired from the products of British or any other system of training. "Such volunteers as these manned our ships in the war of 1812, and will man in the next naval war."

The United States Custom House and Postoffice are located in rented quarters.

The government expects to erect a public building here in the near future and the city will in the next six months build a new high school, central school, and combined jail and emergency hospital.

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United States Navy, was its famous conflict, which has already been referred to, with the Alabama. No history of the Kearsarge would be complete without dwelling upon this conflict, which was one of the most brilliant in the naval history of the country. The following description of this battle is given, because of the many descriptions to be found upon the subject, it seems to be the fairest and most impartial to both sides of the conflicting forces:

### DESCRIPTION OF THE BATTLE.

"Sunday morning June 12, 1864, the United States ship of war Kearsarge, Captain John A. Winslow, lay off the



D. S. Jones, First President of Council After Incorporation of City.

town of Flushing, Holland. Many of her officers and men were ashore, and everything about the ship denoted an entire absence of thought of immediate action. As the day wore on, however, a contest suddenly appeared at the foremast, and a gun was fired, a signal for every member of the ship's company to repair on board immediately. Winslow had just received a telegram from Dayton, our Minister to France, saying that the Alabama had arrived at Cherbourg. On leaving the Cape of Good Hope Semmes had sailed for Europe, arriving at Cherbourg June 11th. Hastily making his preparations for an immediate departure, Winslow assumed to Dover for dispatches, and on Tuesday morning at Cherbourg, where the Confederate flag could be seen across the breakwater flying from the Alabama. Fearing that the twenty-four hour rule might be applied to this ship, Winslow did not anchor in the harbor, but took a station off the port. A close watch was placed in order to prevent the Alabama from again getting to sea unobserved. In this instance, however, the precaution was unnecessary, for Captain Semmes had determined to offer battle to the national ship and indicated his intention to the United States consul.

The two vessels were well matched. The former had a slight superiority of speed, but this was not utilized in the action. A year before, while at the Azores, Captain Winslow had arranged his sheet chains for a distance of forty feet, and the Alabama, by the use of his vessel, and extending six feet, two inches down, as additional protection to his machinery. These chains were secured up and down by merlines and deal boards. But as this part of the ship was struck only twice in the action, this protection could not be counted as having materially aided the Federal



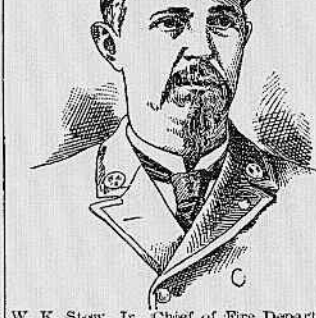
S. J. Harwood, Chief of Police.

ship. The comparative force of the two vessels was as follows:

	Tons.	Guns.	Pounds.	Crew.
Kearsarge...	3,200	11	1,200,000	350
Alabama...	3,200	11	1,200,000	350

"The sentiment among the town folk was overwhelmingly in favor of the Alabama. Winslow's men were recognized on the streets they were received with enthusiasm and prophecies of victory. Winslow realized that the public feeling in France and England was against him and his crew, but he knew what the American flag had done in former years, and he had an implicit confidence in the men under his command. The Kearsarge in grim silence stood guard over the harbor. With each passing hour the usual routine of the Sabbath on an American war ship began. The decks were holy-stoned with

the same barren results; that Friday and Saturday, yet no fight. "Sunday, June 13th, dawned with a light haze hanging over the harbor and town, but in the light westerly breeze the ships were gradually clearing away, revealing the shipping and town in all the beauty of a bright summer's day. A careful scrutiny of the harbor gave no indications of the Alabama's coming out that day, and the usual routine of the Sabbath on an American war ship began. The decks were holy-stoned with



W. K. Stow, Jr., Chief of Fire Department.

ill they shone with dazzling whiteness. The brass work and guns were polished, ropes were coiled away, and everything made shipshape, in keeping with the holy day. After the men, dressed in their best clothes, had been inspected they were dismissed to attend divine services. At 10:20 A. M. while the bell was tolling for church, the officer of the deck reported a steamer coming out of the harbor, but this was a common occurrence, so it aroused no special interest. But a few seconds later the words "She's coming, and heading this way" rang out over the ship. It was not necessary to ask who she meant. Captain Winslow immediately put aside his prayer book, and seizing the trumpet ordered the ship about and decks cleared for action.

Between nine and ten o'clock Semmes had got under way, accompanied by the French Ironclad Couronne, flying the pennant of the commandant. The Couronne was a small ship, but it was not to be taken place within the Marine League. Having performed this duty, the Frenchman returned to port. Close following him was the private English yacht, Dehoundt. Soon the ships and vantage points along the coast were black

with spectators eager to witness a naval battle, while special wires to Paris reported each stage of action. Special trains were run from Paris at frequent intervals, which added to the crowd. It is estimated that at least fifteen thousand people witnessed the battle.

"In order that no question about neutral waters should be raised, Winslow led the Alabama seaward, and at 10:30 on reaching point about seven miles from land turned about and headed straight for the Alabama, notwithstanding he was exposed to the making fire from the entire broadside of the Confederate cruiser. At 10:57, when the vessels were about 1,800 yards apart, the Alabama opened the action with a broadside, which cut away a little of the rigging, but did no material damage. A second and part of a third broadside were fired with a similar want of serious effect, when Captain Winslow, fearing a taking fire, sheeted round and delivered his broadside of five-second shells at a distance of about 900 yards. Without checking his speed Winslow endeavored to pass under the Alabama's stern, but Semmes prevented this by putting his helm hard to port. Both vessels then continued to keep their starboard broadside toward the other, which resulted in a circular motion, the ships going around a common center. Even complete revolutions were made in this way, the three mile current carrying the ships westward.

"Early in the action a shot from the Kearsarge struck the Alabama's mainmast and colors. Observing this, the National crew cheered, but the Confederates soon hoisted another ensign at the mainmast. Then continued the battle in shot carried away the masts of the Kearsarge's colors, shipped at the mizzen, and in doing so pulled sufficiently to knock the ship, and thereby further tilted the flag that was to be shown in case of victory. The firing of the Kearsarge was an exhibition of magnificent gunnery. Word was passed along the battery to make every shot tell. The wisdom of this was shown in the result of the Kearsarge firing only 173 missiles, nearly all of which took effect, while the Alabama fired 307, of which only 28 struck.

"At noon the Alabama ceased firing, her fore topmast and jib, and endeavored to run ashore. This, for the first time brought her port broadside to the front. Two guns could be used, Semmes hoping to bring the shot-holes on the starboard side above the water line, by heading the ship to port. Observing the Alabama's intention, Winslow quickly steered so as to cross her bow, and was about to pour in a raking fire when she hauled down her flag. Not knowing whether the colors had been carried away by a shot or by accident, and thinking it might be merely a ruse to enable the Alabama to reach the neutral waters, now only 700 yards distant, Winslow ordered him to hold his guns in readiness to open again at a moment's notice. About this time a white flag was displayed, which convinced the National commander that the Alabama intended to surrender, and he began his preparations for rendering her assistance. But at this moment the Alabama renewed her firing, upon which the Kearsarge discharged three or four guns. Yet the course of the famous cruiser had been run. She was rapidly settling, and the only two serviceable boats in the Kearsarge were sent to save the drowning men. In a few minutes the Alabama settled by the stern, and lifting her bow high out of the water, plunged to the bottom of the sea."

"At the close of the war the Kearsarge was still in commission, taking several cruises. While on one of these cruises, in March, 1866, on a passage from Monrovia, Liberia, to Lisbon, yellow fever appeared on board. Seven officers, including the surgeon, Dr. Benjamin Vreeland, and seven of her crew died. Four of the unfortunate officers were members of the engineer corps.

On April 1st, 1865, the Kearsarge again went into commission at Boston, Mass., and made a cruise in European waters, under Commander A. D. Harrell, U. S. N., returned to Boston, and went out of commission August 14th, 1866. January 16th, 1868, she was again put in commission at Boston, and made a cruise in the South Pacific Ocean, under Commander James M. Thomas, U. S. N., her executive officer in the combat with the Alabama; going out of commission at Mare Island yard, California. On December 8th, 1878, she went into commission at Mare Island, and made a cruise in Asiatic waters under the following commanders: D. R. Harmony, till March 1, 1878; R. F. R. him was the private English yacht, Dehoundt. Soon the ships and vantage points along the coast were black

On Havane harbor, assumed command October 20th, 1885. The Kearsarge returned to Portsmouth, N. H., and went out of commission December 1st, 1885. Commander O. F. Heyerman assumed command November 23rd, 1893.

Although the vessel had long before outlived its usefulness as a modern war vessel, and had remained in the service longer than any of her sister ships, Semmes, under the command of Commander Oscar F. Heyerman, the Kearsarge was wrecked February 2, 1894, on Ronador Reef, at which time she was the flag ship of Acting Rear Admiral O. F. Stenton. To show the veneration in which the old ship was held Congress, which was then in session, immediately, upon receipt of the news of the disaster, made an appropriation and dispatched a United States vessel to the scene of the wreck to save the vessel if possible, but it was too late. The colors were afterwards recovered, and on June 19, 1894, thirty years after the bat-

tle with the Alabama, they were presented to the representative of the navy department in the New York stock exchange, all business being suspended an hour for the ceremony. The flag, bell and numerous other relics were subsequently recovered by traveling Americans, who found and purchased them in junk shops at different Caribbean ports.

For a number of years a piece of the

Dr. A. C. Jones, Quarantine Officer.

stern post of the Kearsarge, with one of the shells lodged therein, a memento of the famous battle, has been exhibited at the World's Columbian Exposition at Chicago, and one of the most attractive exhibits on the model battleship, and was seen by upwards of three million people.

Geo. B. West, President Citizens and Marine Bank, and one of the Earliest Residents of Newport News.

WOMAN IN ART.

Properly of woman in art, it may be of interest to mention that owing to the talent and enterprise of the only woman photographer in the State of Virginia, Newport News can now boast of one of the finest photographic studios in the country. The Tennant Photograph Gallery, situated in the Commercial Building at the corner of Washington avenue and Twenty-sixth street, has recently been enlarged, renovated, and furnished with the latest and most approved appliances used in modern photography. Mrs. M. W. Tennant is now entering upon her second year in this city, and the patronage received during the past year has been such as to warrant her in taking the whole of the second floor in Commercial building and greatly enlarging and beautifying her premises, where her patrons will find every convenience and courteous attention.

Mrs. Tennant, who is a graduate of the Maryland School of Design, is an artist of the very first rank, having fifteen years experience in her profession. Her crayon portraits, of which she makes a specialty, adorn some of the finest houses in the states of Maryland and Virginia. Mrs. Tennant has recently been fortunate in securing the services of Mr. Hallis Clark, who has been for many years leading artist in the studio at Richmond. It goes without saying that Mr. Clark is an all-around photographic artist. At the last State Convention of the Photographers of Virginia, Mr. Clark was awarded the medal for the finest and most artistic display. Also a medal for the six best retouched negatives.



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